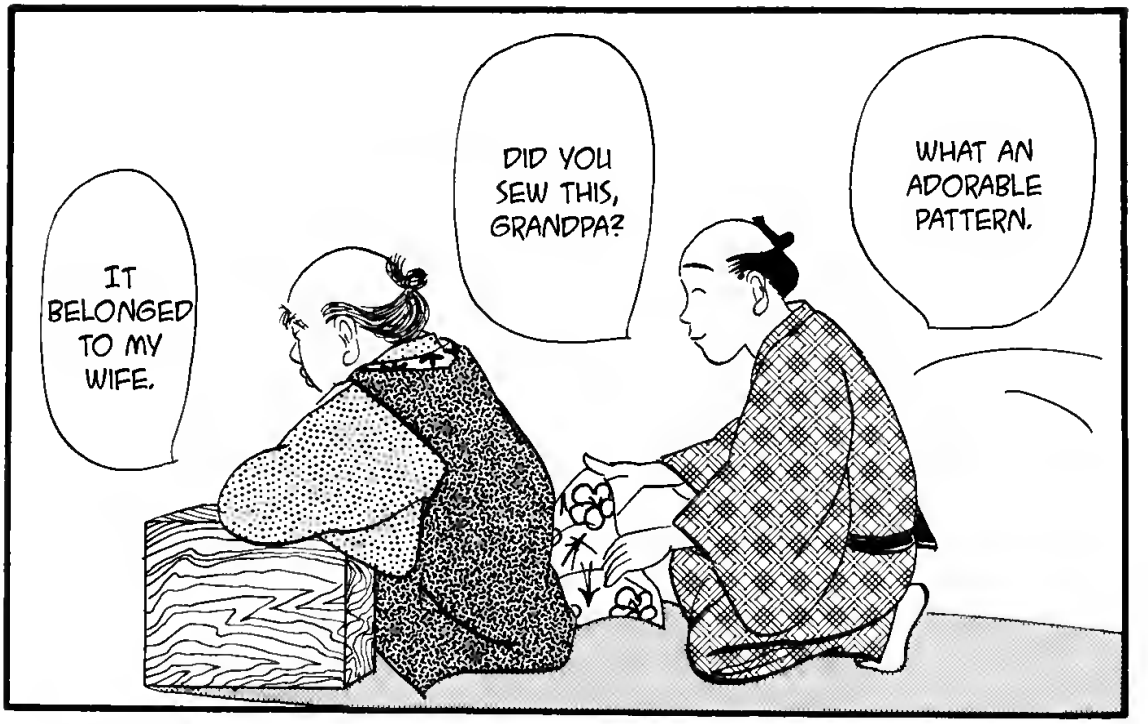
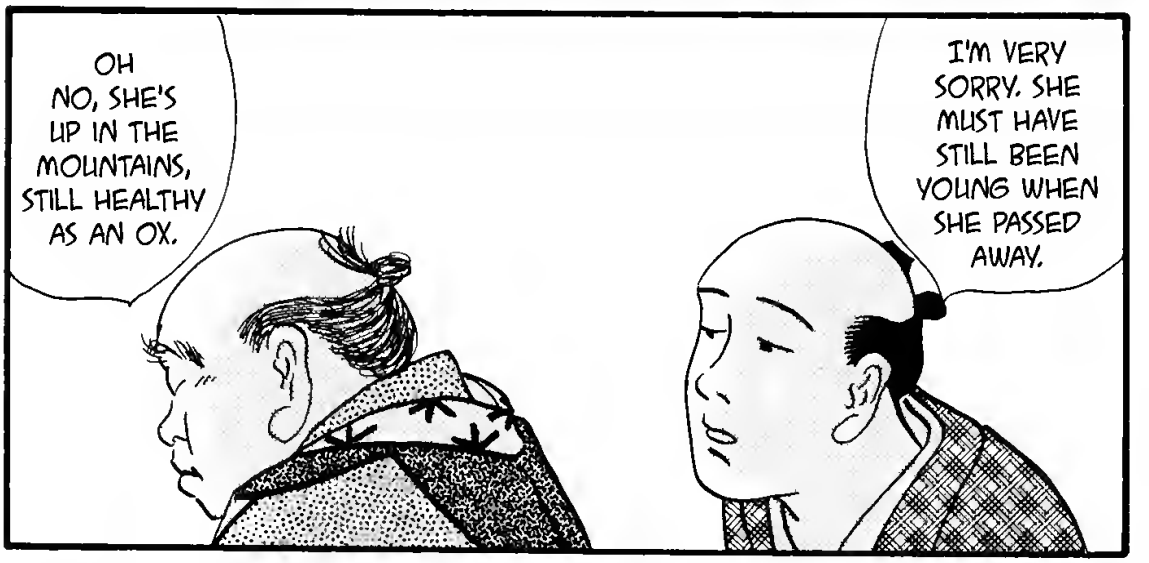
Tale
32

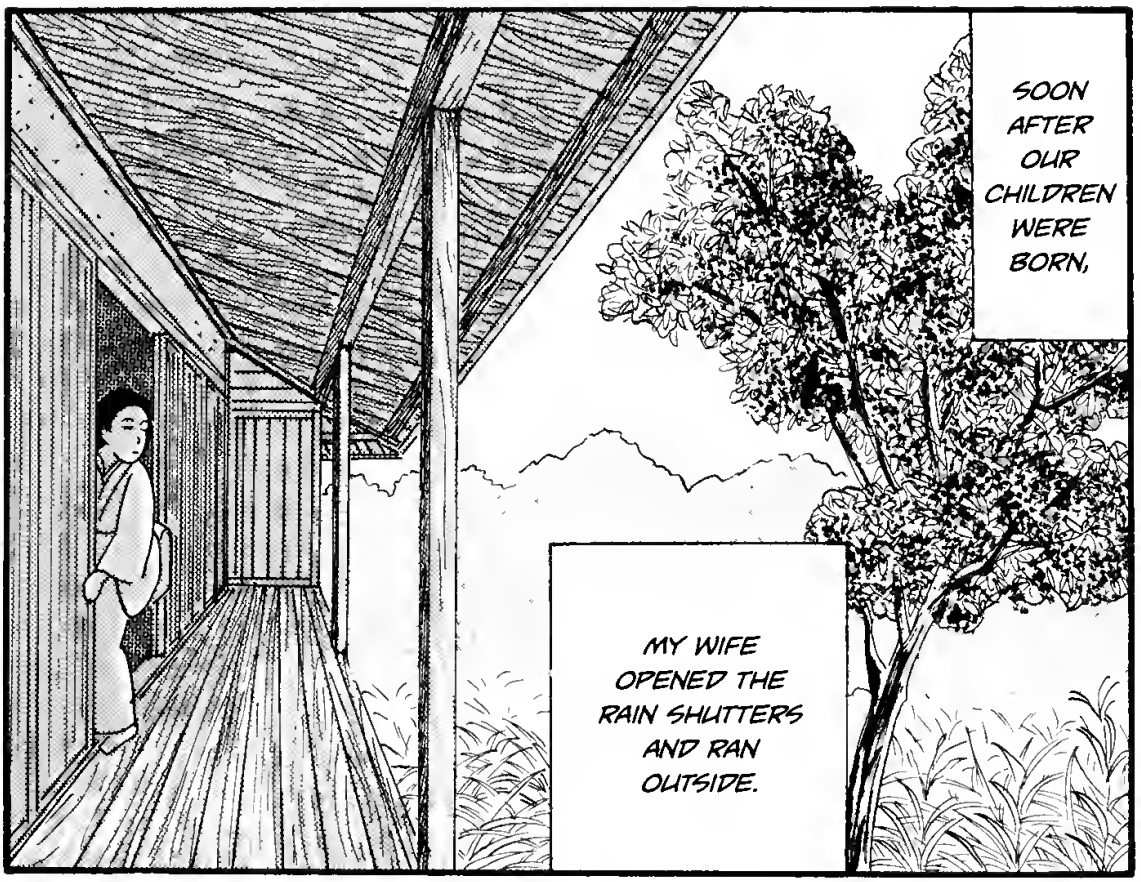
The Running Woman

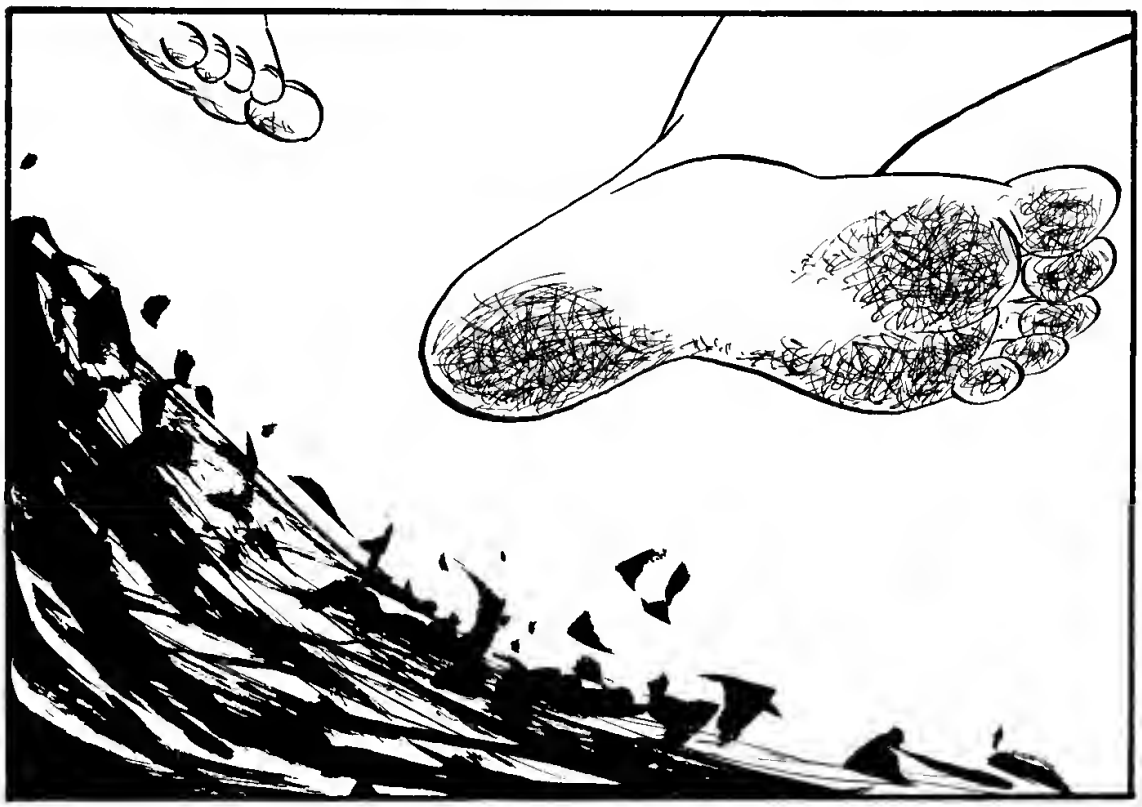
ONCE, WHEN I WAS TRAVELING IN CHI-CHIBUJI...
LOOK AT THAT.
INSTEAD OF RELYING ON TOBACCO TO GET THROUGH RETIREMENT, THAT OLD MAN'S GOT HIMSELF A NEEDLE-WORK BOX.
SMACK!
Ha ha ha...
WHAT'S NEXT? A BEAR WRITING SUTRAS?


WHAT AN ADORABLE PATTERN.
DID YOU SEW THIS, GRANDPA?
IT BELONGED TO MY WIFE.

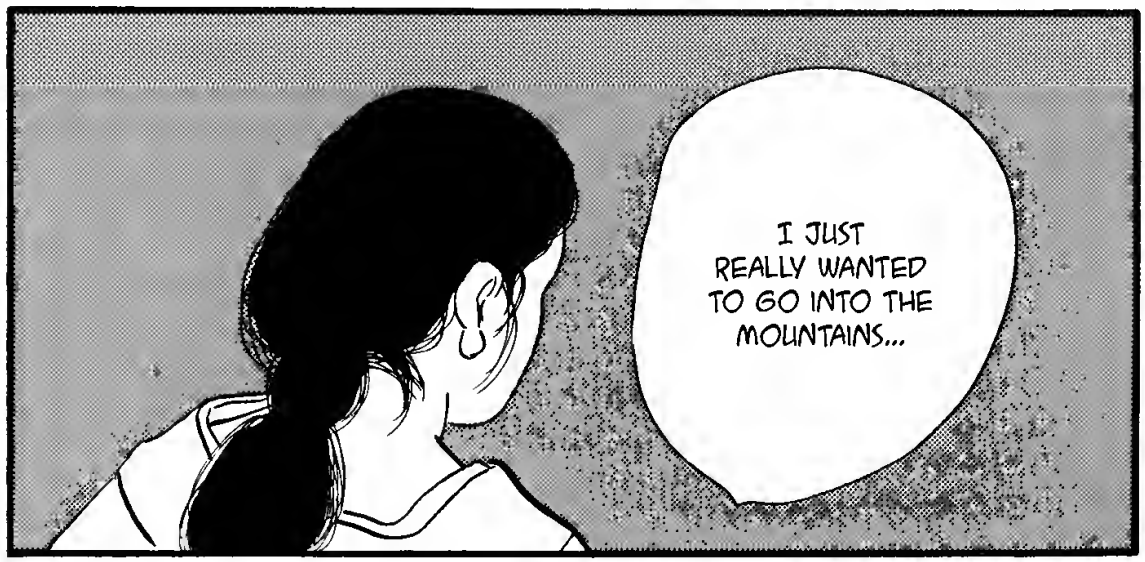

I'M VERY SORRY. SHE MUST HAVE STILL BEEN YOUNG WHEN SHE PASSED AWAY.
OH NO, SHE'S UP IN THE MOUNTAINS, STILL HEALTHY AS AN OX.

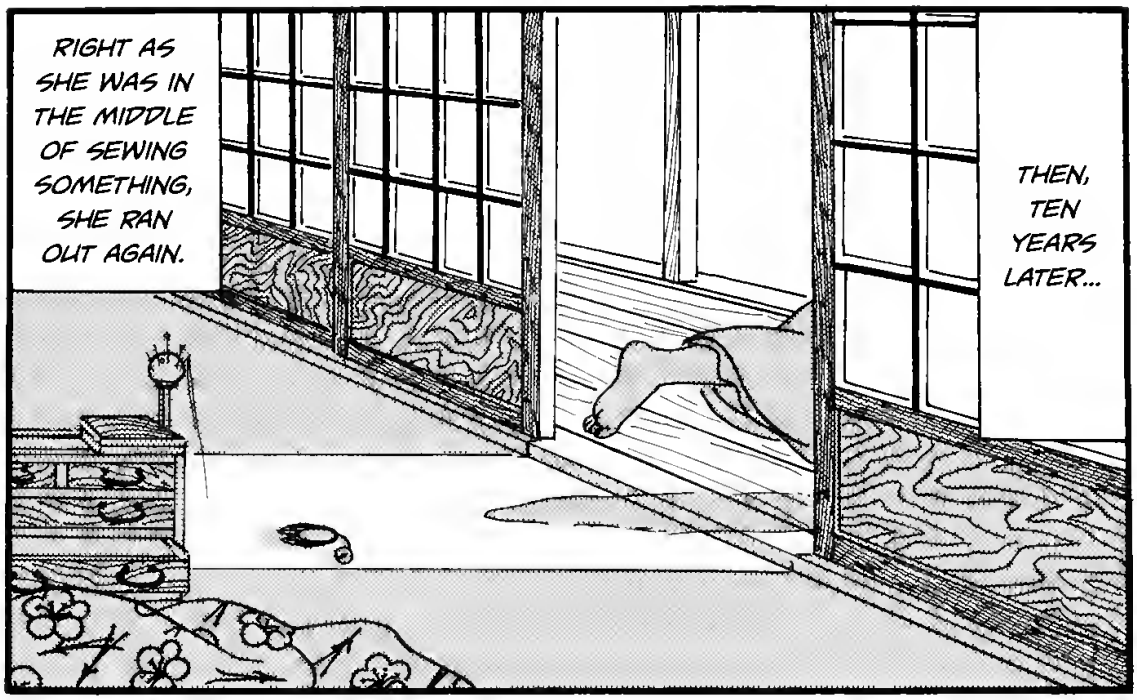
OH.

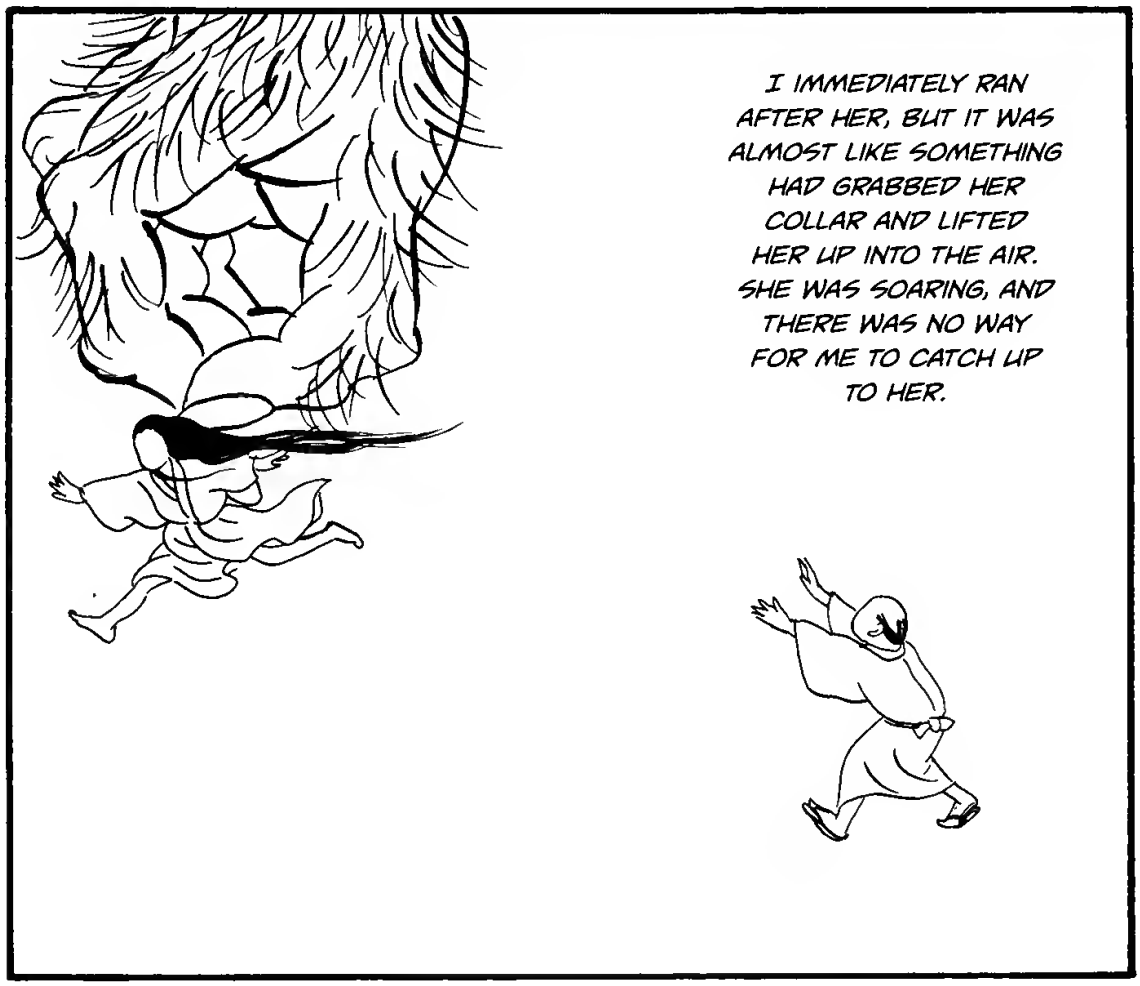

SOON AFTER OUR CHILDREN WERE BORN,
MY WIFE OPENED THE RAIN SHUTTERS AND RAN OUTSIDE.

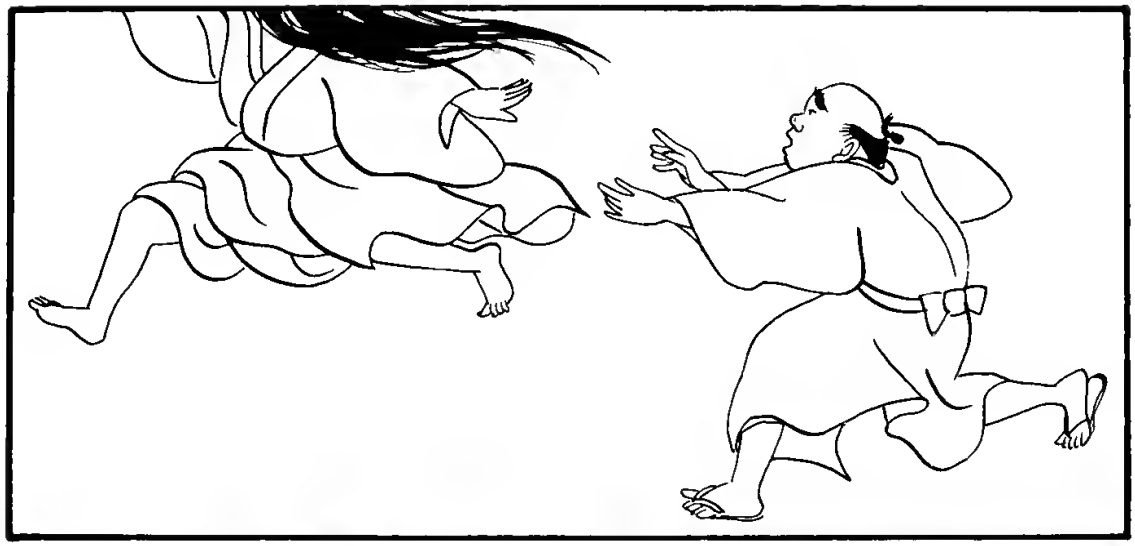


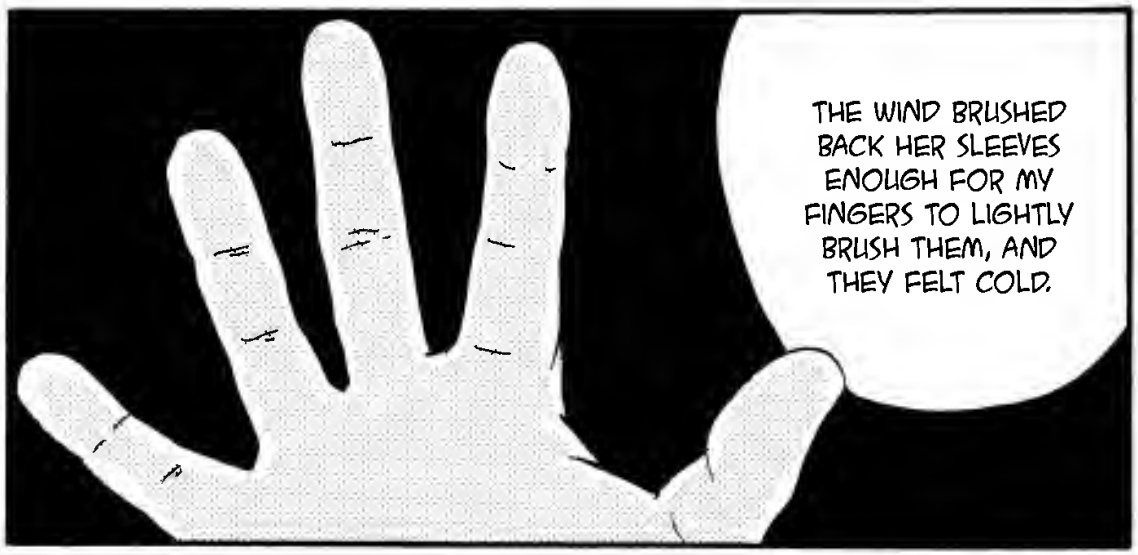
SEVERAL YOUNG MEN RAN AFTER HER AND TRIED TO HOLD HER DOWN, BUT SHE BROKE PAST THEM, WITH ALL THE FEROCITY OF A WILD HORSE.

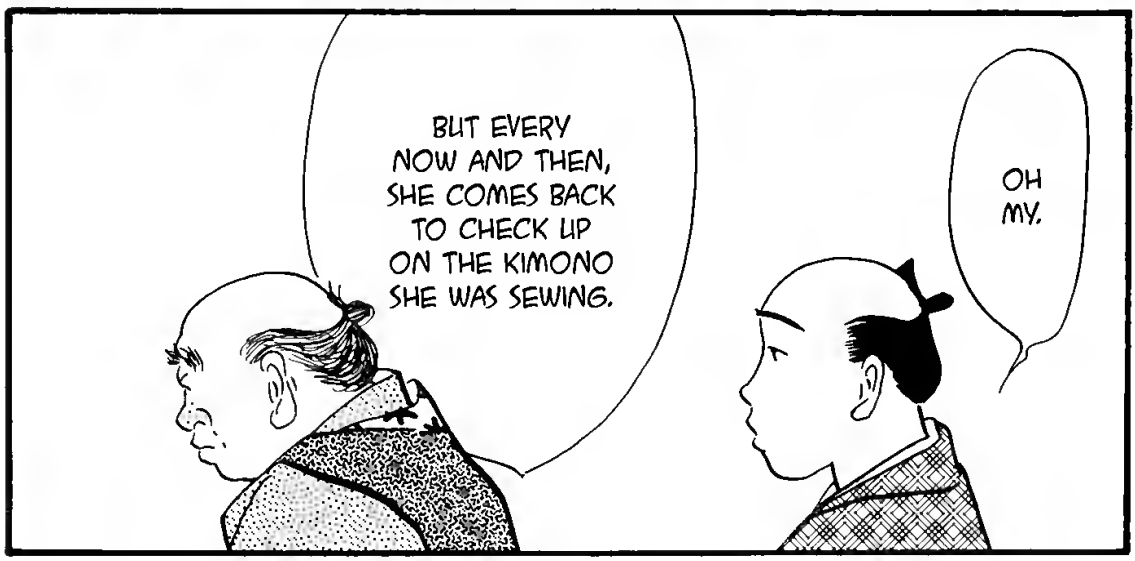

I JUST REALLY WANTED TO GO INTO THE MOUNTAINS...


RIGHT AS SHE WAS IN THE MIDDLE OF SEWING SOMETHING, SHE RAN OUT AGAIN.
THEN, TEN YEARS LATER...


I IMMEDIATELY RAN AFTER HER, BUT IT WAS ALMOST LIKE SOMETHING HAD GRABBED HER COLLAR AND LIFTED HER UP INTO THE AIR. SHE WAS SOARING, AND THERE WAS NO WAY FOR ME TO CATCH UP TO HER.




THE WIND BRUSHED BACK HER SLEEVES ENOUGH FOR MY FINGERS TO LIGHTLY BRUSH THEM, AND THEY FELT COLD.


BUT EVERY NOW AND THEN, SHE COMES BACK TO CHECK UP ON THE KIMONO SHE WAS SEWING.
OH MY.

EVEN NOW?
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FFWSHH